

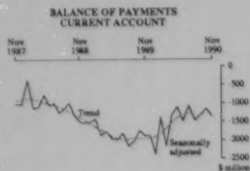
# Statistics Weekly

Thursday, 17 January 1991

## *The week in statistics ...*

- ☐ Current account in better shape despite November setback 2
- ☐ Super cover spreads rapidly — but not uniformly 3
- ☐ Decline in union membership slows 4
- ☐ Home building approvals level out 5
- ☐ In brief ... 5
- ☐ All the week's releases 6
- ☐ Calendar of key releases up to 29 January 7
- ☐ The latest ...
  - key State indicators 7
  - key national indicators 8

## Current account in better shape despite November setback



In seasonally adjusted terms, the current account deficit for the November 1990 balance of payments rose \$217 million to \$1,371 million. This result follows successive falls totalling \$312 million in September and October.

The main contributors to the increased November deficit were a decrease of \$122 million in the merchandise trade surplus (exports rose 2% while imports rose 6%) and an increase of \$111 million in the net income deficit. This was partly offset by a larger net unrequited transfers surplus (up \$30 million).

In original terms, the current account deficit fell \$273 million. The accumulated deficit for the five months to November is 29 per cent less than the deficit for the same period in 1989 — thanks almost entirely to an 82 per cent reduction in the merchandise trade deficit between those periods.

BALANCE OF PAYMENTS  
CURRENT ACCOUNT  
\$ million

	October 1990		November 1990	
	Original	Seasonally adjusted	Original	Seasonally adjusted
Balance on merchandise trade	-122	265	-19	143
Net services	-416	-314	-254	-328
Net income	-1,314	-1,295	-1,323	-1,406
Net unrequited transfers	230	190	247	220
Balance on current account	-1,622	-1,154	-1,349	-1,371

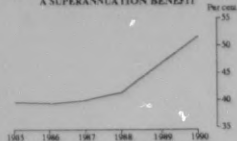
Rural exports fell \$20 million or 2 per cent in original terms. The largest falls were in sugar (down \$40 million or 36%) and "other rural" exports (down \$23 million or 7%). The only significant rise occurred in wool, up \$29 million or 17 per cent on the low October figure.

Non-rural exports rose \$101 million or 3 per cent, with the largest rises recorded in the miscellaneous categories of "other non-rural" (up \$81 million or 55%) and "other" manufactures (up \$50 million or 14%). The only groups to record falls were coal (down \$96 million or 17%) and metal ores and minerals (down \$18 million or 3%).

Imports fell \$22 million due to a drop of \$239 million (or 31%) in imports of transport equipment, which were relatively high in October, and textiles, down \$4 million. Fuels imports rose (by \$84 million or 27%), as did imports of metals and metal manufactures (up \$39 million or 19%) and machinery (up \$39 million or 3%).

For further information, order the publication *Balance of Payments, Australia* (5301.0), or contact either Zia Abbasi on (06) 252 6689 or Neil Batty on (06) 252 5540.

PROPORTION OF ALL EMPLOYEES RECEIVING  
A SUPERANNUATION BENEFIT



## Super cover spreads rapidly — but not uniformly

The total number of employees covered by superannuation was 4,173,000 or 64 per cent of all employees in August 1990. This figure includes those employees covered by schemes not arranged or provided by their employers.

Employees who received superannuation coverage as a benefit in their main job numbered 3,389,700 or 52 per cent. Of all females, 44 per cent received a superannuation benefit in their main job, compared with 58 per cent of all males.

For employees working 35 hours or more per week in all jobs, the proportion was 59 per cent in August 1990, an increase from 49 per cent two years earlier.

Of employees working less than 35 hours per week in all jobs, 23 per cent had a superannuation benefit, compared with 10 per cent in 1988.

In the private sector 55 per cent of employees working full-time received a superannuation benefit, compared with 72 per cent in the public sector.

The survey also collected information on many other benefits received by employees. Overall movements in the main types of employment benefits are shown in the table below.

EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS  
Percentage of employees receiving benefits in main job

Selected benefits	Working 35 hours or more per week		Working less than 35 hours per week		Total employees 1990
	1985	1990	1985	1990	
Annual leave	93	92	33	32	79
Sick leave	93	91	33	32	79
Long-service leave	76	77	25	25	66
Superannuation	46	59	8	23	52
Transport	18	20	6	6	17
Goods and services	21	17	18	20	18
Telephone	10	10	4	3	9
Holiday expenses	5	4	1	1	4
Medical	4	4	1	1	3
No benefits	4	4	46	39	11

The number of full-time employees receiving a superannuation benefit tended to increase along with the size of business (number of employees). For those businesses with less than 10 employees, this was 42 per cent while 71 per cent of employees working at locations with 100 or more employees received a superannuation benefit.

For further information, order the publication *Employment Benefits, Australia* (6334.0), or contact Michael Jones on (06) 252 6503.

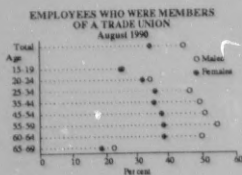
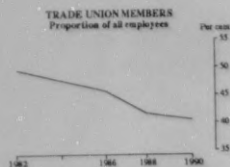
## Decline in union membership slows

The proportion of employees who were trade union members in August 1990 was 41 per cent, compared with the estimate of 42 per cent in 1988.

Thus the steep decline in union membership through the 1980s — 50 per cent of employees were union members in 1982 — appears to have slowed.

In August 1990, 2,659,600 employees were members of a trade union in connection with their main job. This represents 41 per cent of the 6,565,600 employees aged 15 to 69 who were employed during this period.

Approximately 45 per cent of male and 35 per cent of female employees were trade union members in the survey period. Among permanent employees, 49 per cent of males and 41 per cent of females were members of a trade union. For casual employees, these estimates were 20 per cent for males and 18 per cent for females.



EMPLOYEES WHO WERE TRADE UNION MEMBERS

	August 1986		August 1990	
	Number of members ('000)	Proportion of employees who were trade union members (per cent)	Number of members ('000)	Proportion of employees who were trade union members (per cent)
Males	1,685.1	50	1,683.8	45
Females	908.8	39	975.8	35
Persons	2,593.9	46	2,659.6	41

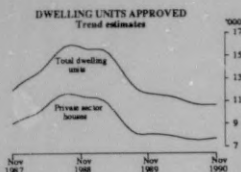
The distribution of weekly earnings from main job shows that both male and female trade union members earn, on average, more than persons who are not union members. However, for full-time employees, male mean weekly earnings were the same, regardless of trade union membership while female union members earned \$35 more per week than non-members. Male union members who worked part-time earned \$50 per week more than their counterparts who were not a member of a trade union. For females, this difference was \$45.

Employees who worked less than 35 hours per week in their main job were less likely to be a member of a trade union than employees working 35 hours or more (35% and 42% respectively).

Young persons were less likely to be members of a trade union. For those aged 15 to 19 years, 25 per cent were union members. For those aged 20 to 24 one employee in three was a union member.

Superannuation coverage has spread to 77 per cent of union members. Only 55 per cent of employees who were not a member of a trade union have superannuation.

For more information, order the publication *Trade Union Members, Australia* (6325.0), or contact Michael Jones on (06) 252 6503.



## Home building approvals level out

The trend series for total dwelling units approved has levelled out in November 1990 following continual decline since March 1989. The trend series for private sector house approvals is actually showing a small upward movement, but additional observations will be required to confirm this.

The number of private houses approved in November increased by 7.1 per cent (seasonally adjusted) compared with October to 8,120, the highest monthly level since March 1990. Total dwelling unit approvals also increased, by 5.3 per cent to 10,998, seasonally adjusted.

DWELLING UNITS APPROVED, NOVEMBER 1990

	Private sector houses		Total dwelling units	
	No.	Percentage change on previous month	No.	Percentage change on previous month
Original	8,765	7.1	11,895	4.9
Seasonally adjusted	8,120	7.1	10,998	5.3
Trend estimate	7,722	0.7	10,651	0.0

The value of total building approvals (residential and non-residential) increased by 5.2 per cent to \$1,902.6 million in November 1990, seasonally adjusted, but remained 13.2 per cent lower than the November 1989 figure.

The trend in the value of total building approved continues to decline at a diminishing rate, and the decline in November was very slight. The trend (to August 1990) in the value of non-residential building approved is also continuing to decline.

For further information, order the publication *Building Approvals, Australia* (8731.0), or contact Roland Schmitz on (06) 252 6067.

### INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS 1989-90

Country	Population density per km <sup>2</sup>
Australia	2
Canada	3
New Zealand	12
United States of America	27
Spain	77
France	102
Italy	191
Germany	218
United Kingdom	234
Japan	326

Source: *Australia at a Glance*, 1991 (1309.0)

## In brief ...

Extracts from recent releases.

### □ House prices

The established house prices, Australia index fell by 0.9 per cent between the June and September quarters 1990. This represents the first decrease recorded since the beginning of the series in September quarter 1986.

Source: *House Price Indexes: Eight Capital Cities, September Quarter 1990* (6416.0).

### □ Super fund assets

At the end of June 1990, assets of superannuation funds and approved deposit funds (ADFs) totalled \$124,529 million, up \$2,434 million (2.0%) on the March 1990 figures of \$122,095 million.

Source: *Assets of Superannuation Funds and Approved Deposit Funds, Australia, March Quarter 1989 to June Quarter 1990* (5656.0).

## Inquiries

The ABS supplies a wide range of statistical information:

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### Suggestions

Any suggestions for improvement to this publication should be addressed to:

Peter Damcevski  
Editor  
*Statistics Weekly*  
(06) 252 6101

## All the week's releases: 9 to 15 January

### General

Australia at a Glance, 1991 (1309.0; \$1.00)  
Statistics Weekly, 10 January 1991 (1318.0; \$4.00)  
Economic Indicators, Vic, December 1990 (1307.2; \$5.00)  
Australian Capital Territory at a Glance, 1991 (1314.8; \$1.00)

### Demography

Estimated Resident Population in Statistical Local Areas, ACT,  
Preliminary, June 1990 (3205.8; \$5.50)

### National accounts, finance and foreign trade

Balance of Payments, Aust., November 1990 (5301.0; \$15.00)  
Exports, Australia, Monthly Summary Tables, October 1990 (5432.0; \$9.00)  
Commercial Finance, Aust., October 1990 (5643.0; \$5.50)

### Labour statistics and prices

The Labour Force, Aust., November 1990 (6203.0; \$14.50)  
Price Indexes of Materials Used in Coal Mining, Aust., November 1990  
(6415.0; \$10.00)

### Secondary industry and distribution

Manufacturing Production, Australia, Household Appliances and  
Electrical Equipment, October 1990 (8357.0; \$6.50)  
Manufacturing Production, Australia, Fibres, Yarns, Fabrics, Bedding and  
Floor Coverings, October 1990 (8360.0; \$10.00)  
Manufacturing Production, Australia, Plastics, Rubber, Paints, Detergents  
and Industrial Chemicals, October 1990 (8362.0; \$6.50)  
Manufacturing Production, Australia, Wood and Wood Products,  
October 1990 (8369.0; \$4.50)  
Building Approvals, Aust., November 1990 (8731.0; \$12.50)  
Engineering Construction Survey, Aust., September Qtr 1990 (8762.0;  
\$10.00)  
Public Sector Construction Activity Survey, Aust., 1988-89 (8775.0; \$15.00)  
Dwelling Unit Commencements Reported by Approving Authorities,  
Qld, October 1990 (8741.3; \$10.00)  
Building Activity, WA, September Qtr 1990 (8752.5; \$10.00)  
Building Approvals, Tas., November 1990 (8731.6; \$8.50)  
Dwelling Unit Commencements Reported by Approving Authorities,  
Tas., October 1990 (8741.6; \$3.30)  
Building Approvals, NT, November 1990 (8731.7; \$5.50)

### Transport

Motor Vehicle Registrations, Qld, November 1990 (9303.3; \$10.00)  
Motor Vehicle Registrations, WA, November 1990 (9303.5; \$10.00)

## Calendar of key releases

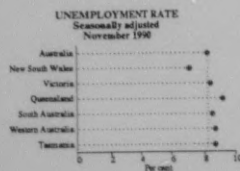
Expected releases over the fortnight to 29 January 1991

### January

- 17** The Labour Force, Australia, December 1990, Preliminary (6202.0; \$10.00)
- Job Vacancies and Overtime, Australia, November 1990 (6354.0; \$11.50)
- Retail Trade, Australia, November 1990 (8501.0; \$10.00)
- 21** Housing Finance for Owner Occupation, Australia, November 1990 (5609.0; \$10.00)
- 25** Export Price Index, Australia, November 1990 (6405.0; \$7.50)
- 29** Price Index of Materials Used in Building Other Than House Building, Eight Capital Cities, November 1990 (6407.0; \$10.00)
- Manufacturing Production, Australia, December 1990, Preliminary (8301.0; \$10.00)
- Registrations of New Motor Vehicles, Australia, December 1990, Preliminary (9301.0; \$10.00)

## The latest ...

Changes to key State indicators — consolidated to 15 January 1991



	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Aust.
— Percentage change from same period previous year —									
New capital expenditure (June qtr 90)*	-2.3	-6.2	-5.5	-10.6	-19.6	-21.6	n.a.	n.a.	-8.8
Retail turnover (October 90) (trend estimate)	6.0	-1.5	4.5	7.2	2.1	7.7	n.a.	9.5	3.8
New motor vehicle registrations (Nov. 90)†	-5.1	-20.5	-2.3	0.7	-13.0	-10.5	-9.5	-13.2	-9.1
Number of dwelling unit approvals (November 90)	3.8	-9.8	-18.5	0.1	-27.7	-23.5	-36.7	13.3	-10.1
Value of total building work done (June qtr 90)	2.0	-5.4	-26.3	4.0	-15.9	-15.5	-6.0	-7.7	-7.5
Employed persons November 90*	-0.1	-1.0	0.0	-0.8	-0.3	1.3	-5.1	1.0	-0.3
Capital city consumer price index (Sept. qtr 90)	5.8	6.4	5.3	6.3	7.0	5.5	6.0	6.2	6.0
Average weekly earnings (full-time adult ordinary time) (August 90)	5.4	7.0	6.9	7.3	7.9	6.9	6.9	6.8	6.4
Population (June 90)	1.0	1.4	2.6	1.0	2.5	1.2	0.6	2.3	1.5
Room nights in licensed hotels and motels, etc (June qtr 90)	5.4	-0.9	5.7	5.5	-4.1	-1.2	8.5	14.8	3.6

\* Seasonally adjusted except for NT and ACT. † Seasonally adjusted except for Tas, NT and ACT.

Key national indicators – consolidated to 15 January 1991

			Latest figure available		Percentage change (a) on		
			Original	Seasonally adjusted	Previous period	Corresponding period last year	
Period							
<b>National production</b>							
Gross domestic product	— current prices	\$m	Sept. qtr 90	93,635	93,427	-0.8	3.6
	— 1984-85 prices	"		63,152	63,670	-1.6	-0.7
<b>Industrial activity</b>							
New capital expenditure	— current prices	\$m	Sept. qtr 90	7,188	7,515	6.9	-1.8
	— 1984-85 prices	"		5,435	5,692	6.4	-4.1
Expected new capital expenditure	— current prices	"	Three months to Dec. 90	8,326	n.a.	n.a.	-5.5
	— 1984-85 prices (e)	"	October 90	7,148	7,090	-1.3	4.0
Retail turnover	— current prices (e)	"	Sept. qtr 90	14,213	14,858	0.4	0.4
	— 1984-85 prices (e)	"	September 90	11,895	10,998	-7.8	-9.1
New motor vehicle registrations		no.	November 90	47,498	46,936	-5.3	-8.1
Dwelling unit approvals		"	November 90	1,956	1,808	-7.3	-26.5
Value of all building approvals	— current prices	\$m		7,064	7,077	-6.9	-7.5
	— 1984-85 prices	"	June qtr 90	4,484	4,493	-7.6	-12.8
Manufacturers' sales		"	Sept. qtr 90	35,796	34,854	1.3	-0.9
Expected manufacturers' sales		"	Three months to Dec. 90	37,757	n.a.	n.a.	0.3
<b>Labour</b>							
Employed persons (e)		'000	November 90	7,849.9	7,826.1	-0.5	-0.3
Unemployment rate † (e)		%	"	7.4	8.2	0.6	2.3
Participation rate † (e)		"	"	63.5	63.8	-0.1	0.2
Job vacancies (e)		'000	August 90	48.1	49.6	-1.3	-25.3
Average weekly overtime per employee (e)		hours	"	1.2	1.3	-6.5	-17.6
<b>Prices, profits and wages</b>							
Consumer price index	1980-81 = 100.0		Sept. qtr 90	208.9	n.a.	0.7	6.0
Price index of materials used in manufacturing industries	1984-85 = 100.0		October 90	134.1	n.a.	4.6	13.8
Price index of articles produced by manufacturing industry	1988-89 = 100.0		October 90	112.3	n.a.	1.1	6.7
Company profits before income tax	\$m		Sept. qtr 90	3,449	3,337	-4.2	-23.2
Average weekly earnings (Full-time adults; ordinary time)	\$		August 90	541.00	n.a.	1.3	6.4
<b>Interest rates (b) (monthly average)</b>							
90-day bank bills †	% per annum		November 90	12.45	n.a.	-0.35	-5.75
10-year Treasury bonds †	"		"	12.25	n.a.	-1.10	-0.85
<b>Balance of payments</b>							
Exports of merchandise	\$m		November 90	4,447	4,408	2.4	11.7
Imports of merchandise	"		"	4,466	4,265	5.6	-1.6
Balance on merchandise trade (c)	"		"	-19	143	-46.0	n.a.
Balance of goods and services (c)	"		"	-273	-185	-277.5	75.2
Balance on current account (c)	"		"	-1,349	-1,371	-18.8	26.8
Terms of trade (d)	1984-85 = 100.0		Sept. qtr 90	n.a.	105.3	0.3	-1.8
<b>Foreign investment</b>							
Net foreign debt	\$m		30 Sept. 90	124,507	n.a.	1.4	7.3
Net foreign liabilities	"		"	165,572	n.a.	3.3	7.4
<b>Exchange rates (monthly average)</b>							
SUS (e)	per SA		November 90	0.7745	n.a.	-3.5	-1.0
Trade weighted index	May 1970 = 100.0		"	56.2	n.a.	-4.1	-7.6
<b>Other indicators</b>							
Population (resident at end of qtr)	million		June 90	17.1	n.a.	0.3	1.5
Overseas visitors	'000		June 90	157	201	5.6	11.0

(a) Based on seasonally adjusted figures where available. (b) Source: Reserve Bank of Australia. (c) For percentage changes, a minus sign indicates an increase in the deficit; no sign means a decrease in the deficit or an increase in the surplus. (d) The ratio of the price of goods and services for exports to that for imports. (e) Later figures released Thursday, 17 January 1991.

NOTES: † = change is shown in terms of percentage points. n.a. = not available.  
Figures have been taken from a variety of ABS publications. Copies may be obtained from Information Services (see page 6).  
Some of the figures shown are preliminary, some final, and some are revisions of previously published figures. Users should check the latest relevant publication or with the ABS Information Services if the status of the statistic is important.

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